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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5265
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5120
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1002
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 5797
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5489
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3810
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1145
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0350
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3254
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1545
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SUBJECT: NEPAL AND BHUTAN MAY MEET ON BHUTANESE REFUGEES

REF: STORELLA - PITOTTI EMAIL 03/12/07

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty for reasons 1.4(b/d).

Summary

11. (C) Joint Secretary for UN Affairs at the Foreign Ministry told RefCoord March 14 that Nepal and Bhutan would likely meet at the SAARC Summit in New Delhi to discuss the Bhutanese refugees. In a separate meeting, a well-respected Bhutanese refugee leader indicated that Bhutan's Home Minister Jigme Thinley might arrive in Kathmandu March 15 for a personal visit. The same refugee leader also received assurances from a Maoist Central Committee member that the Maoists would not oppose third-country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees.

Nepal - Bhutan Meeting at SAARC Summit Possible

12. (C) Joint Secretary for UN Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dinesh Bhattarai told RefCoord March 14 that Nepal and Bhutan would likely meet (level unknown) at the Fourteenth South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit taking place in New Delhi April 3-4. Prime Minister Koirala would attend the summit, he added. Bhattarai was encouraged that the Core Group of donors intended to deliver a demarche to the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) prior to the SAARC Summit.

Bhutanese Home Minister on Personal Visit to Nepal

13. (C/NF) Joint Secretary Bhattarai mentioned that a senior Bhutanese official might soon make a personal visit to Nepal, but could not provide further details. In a separate meeting March 14, Dr. DNS Dhakal (please protect), a well-respected Bhutanese refugee leader and visiting professor at Duke University, said that Bhutanese Home Minister Jigme Thinley was expected to arrive in Kathmandu March 15 on a personal visit. Thinley, he said, was a close friend and former classmate of Nepal's former Foreign Minister (2000-1) Chakra Prasad Bastola, a sitting Nepali Congress MP who has

frequently spoken on refugee issues. (Note: Bastola was also Nepal's Ambassador to India from 1991 - 1994 during the period the refugees were expelled from Bhutan. In our conversations with him, he has argued that repatriation was the only acceptable resolution of the Bhutanese refugee issue. End Note.) Dhakal anticipated Thinley and Bastola would have informal discussions on Bhutanese refugees.

Maoists Will Not Oppose Refugee Resettlement

14. (C/NF) Dhakal reported that, in a March 13 meeting with Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Matrika Yadav, he had asked about Maoist intentions toward the Bhutanese refugees. According to Dhakal, Yadav replied that the Maoists did not oppose third-country resettlement, although they also supported repatriation to Bhutan.

Comment

15. (C) Home Minister Thinley's possible visit to Kathmandu this week, if it takes place, could offer potential to pave the way for meaningful discussion between Nepal and Bhutan at the SAARC Summit in April. Delivery of a demarche to Bhutan by the Danish Government on behalf of the seven Core Group countries prior to the SAARC Summit, as suggested at the March 12 Core Group meeting (ref email), would be particularly timely.

MORIARTY